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Historical Significance of the Postal Stamps of Mahatma Gandhi from 1948 to 2018

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Introduction

History of postal service and postal stamps go back to some thousand years. The postal stamps are important to make business and faster communication. In almost all countries of the world, the postal tickets are active and in use. Today, this system is being replaced through internet and private courier service. Usually the glimpse of the country's rich cultural and natural heritage are being presented through the postal tickets. Many postal stamps have been published based on art, architecture, sculpture, heritage, defense, celebrities of cinema etc. There also published in honor of many leaders, artists, players, scientists, etc. In this list, Mahatma Gandhi has supremacy (Thakar Ramesh, 2007). At present, men are in the dark shadow of Terrorism, sectarianism, orthodoxy resulting to conflict and violence, which ruins the human kindness. Therefore, the Gandhiji's thoughts are being spread in the society and the nation. It is not easy to introduce Mahatma Gandhi who became Mohan to Mahatma. He is not only Bapu of Gujarat, but Mahatma of the whole country, Gandhibhai of South Africa, famous freedom fighter and the Father of the Nation of Independent India. He was the great man of the world and will remain the same (Parmar Kumarpal, 2017). This article describes both looking at the world renowned stature of the Mahatma Gandhi. It is represented through the Postal Stamps. Here, it seen through the historical significance of the Indian postal stamps.

Introduction of Postal Stamp

Postal stamps look like a small piece of a paper which is a proof of the paid postal cost. It is small but an artistic and historic document that represents the life, economy, social, culture, historical, past and present of the nation and has more value than its size. Actually, the postal stamp is an ambassador, which visits home, streets, towns, cities, countries, and makes them aware of their politeness, culture and heritage. It is a symbol of faith, heritage, history and culture of any nation and their aspirations and expectations (Parmar Kumarpal, 2018).

History of Postal Stamps

Before the stamps were invented, sender would pay cost of post in cash or it would be recovered from the person to whom it is being delivered. The theory of 'one pens', sticky paper was established in the Great Britain on January 10, 1940. Here, charges for the post would be indicated as pre-payment of postage as adhesive stamp and no matter what distance or weight of post it is. The first postage stamp of the world 'The Penny Black' is known as *Mona Lisa* in the postal world. Which came into use in the Britain on May 6, 1840. It was proposed by Sir Roland Hill (Lahiri Anil, 1976). The Queen Victoria was printed in black

color on the a penny stamp. The history of postage stamp started from ‘Penny Black’, is considered the most important in the postal history of the world (Balasubramanian Lakshminarayan, 2009).

In India, in 1852, Mr. Bartel Frerie, commissioner of Sindh introduced a paper of stamp as a mark of prepaid in Sindh province in. Famously known as ‘Sindh Dawk’. The East India Company's merchandise marker was ‘Wide Arrows’ had printed on it (Mehta Yashwant, 1971). After independence, India had published three commemorative stamps on the first anniversary of the independence. On these stamps mark of the national symbol *Ashoka Chakra*, National Flag and first international flight of air India are portrayed (Parmar Kumarpal, 2018).

Now, the world is celebrating the 150th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, one would like to share a glimpse on historical significance of the postal stamps of Mahatma Gandhi. It is as below

Gandhiji's postal stamps

It was not Gandhiji's aim to liberate India from the British, but also, of spread nationalism in the people of the country. There were many movements in Indian Independence. After the arrival of Gandhiji, the movement approached at its new height. Under his leadership, it was nonviolent mass movement. As a result, India achieved independence on August 15, 1947. On August 15, 1948, the first anniversary of India's independence was celebrated- and also the year was marked as the loss of the biggest leader of the nonviolence freedom movements. In memory of independence, four commemorative postal stamps titled as "India's first year of independence" (Plate. 1) were published on Mahatma Gandhi by the Indian Postal Department. They were the first and the most valuable postal tickets on Mahatma Gandhi, which are represented the picture of Indian culture. On October 5, 2007, a set of the stamps were auctioned for 38,000 Euros (Parmar Kumarpal, 2017).

Later, on his centenary year of 1969, more than fifty countries of the world had released postage stamps on Gandhiji. The largest numbers of stamps have been published on Mahatma Gandhi by many countries and islands (Fig.1) in the world (Mehta Usha, 1972).

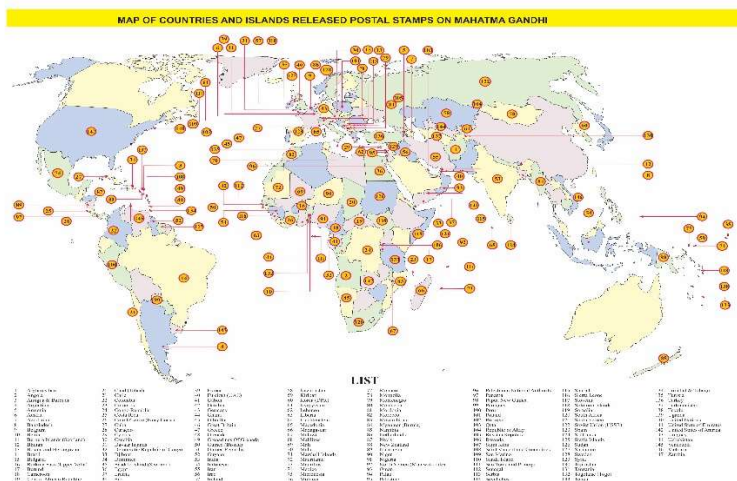


Fig. 1: Map of Countries and Islands Published Postal Stamps of Mahatma Gandhi Stamps on Gandhi Centenary

As said earlier, the large numbers of postal stamps on Gandhiji have been issued by the world. Department of Posts, Government of India published stamps on Gandhiji on his centenary are

After Mahatma Gandhi's death, many people followed his path of non-violence all over the world. To commemorate his values, ideas and to set of the Gandhi Centenary on October 2, 1969. A tribute was given to the 'Great Man' by releasing a set of four-postal stamps by Indian Post Department, GoI. The stamps (Plate. 2) were titled as 'Gandhi Centenary', they are not in the set. It seems as if all the postal stamps have been prepared in separate sheets and have been put on the cover by taking a one-mail postal stamp (Mehta Usha, 1972). They are discussed as below

Gandhiji on Spinning Wheel

Mahatma Gandhi is sitting on the spinning wheel. Spinning wheel has a long history in India. The historical significance of spinning wheel goes back of the thousand years, where Spinning and various skills were in the centre of employment and prosperity of the people at grass root level. The stamp shows, 'Gandhi Spinning on his Charkha' (1st in Plate. 2). On the ticket, the bright sun and full blooming lotus symbolize the emergence of light and thereby prosperity (Jain P. C., 2002). It also reminds us the history when, the British jailed Gandhiji at Yeravda, Pune in 1931-32. During this, the national leaders were making their own thread on a charkha. During this time, millions of charkha were functioning in India. On left of this stamp, the sun and the lotus have been portrayed. Historical significance of this sun is symbol of truth, life, power, strength, energy, and clarity. The lotus flower plays a central role in Indian religions. It has various significance in every religion, it is a symbol of unity and sacrifices. Therefore, it is shown on the stamp. This gives us the message of unity and truth. This is highlighting the thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi.

Father of the Nation

This postal stamp is known as 'Father of the Nation' (2nd in Plate. 2). This stamp is marked with big face of Gandhiji. This has depicted older face of Gandhiji with light smiling. The stamp remember the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. that, "Gandhi was inevitable, if humanity is to survive and progress, Gandhi is inescapable. He lived, thought and acted, inspired by the vision of humanity evolving towards a world of Peace and Harmony" (Department of Posts, 2001).

Baa and Bapu

On the third stamp, the illustration of Kasturba and Gandhi called as '*Baa-Bapu*' (3rd in Plate. 2) was published. This postal stamp of 20 *paisa* seems to have tried to reveal the simplicity of *Baa-Bapu*. Harmonious life of *Baa-Bapu* is inspiring all through this stamp. The significance of this stamp, also clearly shows the role of Kasturba, who was associated with Gandhiji in the freedom movements. When Gandhiji was imprisoned, she took the leadership on Gandhiji's place (Dharaiya Ramanlal, 2017). In 1905, a Gandhi's friend Mr. Henry Pollock came to eat with his European friends at Gandhi's home. They started asking personal questions with bapu's cruelty. Bapu was answering quietly and humbly, but Baa could not bear this, she got upset and went on the terrace. Bapu went to call her but she did

not come. Next day, when Mrs. Pollock asked to Baa about this, Baa answered, "This type of men such a shameless come to see the state of my house and mock me and my house - it cannot be tolerated by me, if bapu wants to meet then does, I do not". Such this simple independent personality of Kasturba is highlighted on the stamp (Kalarthi Mukundbhai, 1969).

Dandi March

Fourth stamp is known as 'Dandi March' (4th in Plate. 2), it has been marked with a sketch of the Gandhiji as picking the salt. The stamp is highlighting the *Dandikuch* as a significant *Satyagraha* in Gandhi's all Satyagrahas. Since, salt is a basic need for everyone, the poor, wealthy and even cattle. Therefore this British had established an iniquitous law on the essential commodity like salt. In 1930, Mahatma Gandhi undertook a historic pilgrimage from Ahmedabad to Dandi to protest against this inhuman law. The Salt March began on March 12, 1930 and continued till April 6, 1930. It was a 24-day non-violent march led by Mahatma Gandhi. It is necessary to read history from 1930 to 1947. The Dandi March was successful. The historical significance of this stamp is Dandi has created a series of creative works in the country (Patel Dhirubhai, 2012).

Stamps on Champaran Satyagraha

In 2017, the postal department issued a set of four commemorative postal stamps (Plate. 3) on the occasion of the centenary celebration of the Champaran Satyagraha of 1917.

The British policy in the Indian economy was such that Indian hand-crafts and other industries got destroyed and India would become an agricultural zone for industries in England. On this reason, British had imposed a law to get raw material in many areas of India. Champaran is a Pargana of east Bihar where the farmers were forced to cultivate only indigo by the British land lords. It resulted into hunger and poverty. If they would not submit to the land lords, a lot of cruelty were being imposed and were punished heavily (Prasad Rajendra, 2011).

During 31st session of congress of Lucknow, Rajkumar Shukla, the farmer's representative met Mahatma Gandhi and requested him to come Champaran and bring them out from the miseries of the forced cultivation of the Indigo (Gandhi M.K., 2008). On April 15, 1917, Mahatma Gandhi came to *Champaran* to conduct the famous indigo labour enquiry against the forced cultivation of indigo. He met and took statements of thousands of farmers and prepared a report, on which the *Tinkathiya* system was abolished. *Tinkathiya* means, farmers were to be planted indigo in the third part of land. Whether it is cultivated or not, they had to pay taxes. British land lords bought the indigo at cheap prices as well. It resulted into hunger and poverty. The historical significance of this Satyagraha is so enlightening to celebrate the centenary of this historical event (Sharma Alka, 2017).

Further, on one of the stamps, Mahatma Gandhi is in his country dress with the farmers. The caption records, "There is no exaggeration but the literal truth to say that in their meetings with the peasants I was face to with God, Ahimsa and Truth". The historical significance of this statement is exploitation of the farmers is sinful and inhuman, which can be fought with weapons of Ahimsa, Truth and Satyagraha. (Gandhi M.K., 2008).

On the second stamp Kasturba educates and teaches various productive skills to the women. It is clear evidence that the illiteracy is route cause of the exploitation. It can be eradicated by education and various skills (Harishchandra Harivilash, 1995).

The third stamp is Gandhiji in his native dress wearing traditional headgear and *khes*. The historical significance of this stamp is to serve the common men dress like them, be like them, live like them and live among them. Historically, it was so great and was followed world over.

The picture of the miniature sheet (Plate. 3) is showing indigo factory emitting smoke and the peasant is working. The historical significance of this ticket is that industrialization is the symbol of economic exploitation and pushing thousands of people in poverty and unemployment.

However, sometimes the stamps and the caption below the ticket do not correspond to each other to give the right message to evaluate the historical significance. In conclusion, there are more tickets on Mahatma Gandhi, which has equal historical value. Here only few of them are evaluated historically.

Plates



Parmar, Pl. 1: Postal Stamps of First Anniversary of Indian



Parmar, Pl. 1: Postal Stamps of Gandhi Centenary 1969



Parmar, Pl. 1: Miniature Sheet of Champaran Satyagraha

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